

709

1

Q U O T A T I O N
A G A I N S T
Q U O T A T I O N,
O R
C U R S O R Y O B S E R V A T I O N S
O N
D r . P R I E S T L E Y ' s L E T T E R S
T O T H E
I N H A B I T A N T S O F B I R M I N G H A M :

In which the CELEBRATED QUOTATION from the late
LORD CHATHAM's Speech in the House of Lords
IS FURTHER CONSIDERED;

A N D
A S E C O N D Q U O T A T I O N

F R O M
A subsequent Speech in the same House, upon a different
Occasion, and by the same great Authority,

I S P R O D U C E D .

By the REV. WILLIAM KEATE,
Author of the FREE EXAMINATION of Dr. PRICE's and
Dr. PRIESTLEY's SERMONS.

L O N D O N :

Printed for JOHN STOCKDALE, opposite Burlington-
House, Piccadilly.

1790.

[Price One Shilling and Sixpence.]

46



T

QUOTATION

AGAINST

QUOTATION.

THE public has been lately favoured with some familiar letters of Dr. Priestley addressed to the inhabitants of Birmingham, part of which were written before, and part since the important decision in the last House of Commons; and it may be paying the Doctor but an ill compliment to leave them unnoticed, since they have an immediate reference to the subject of those sermons, which I have undertaken to examine, and may be thought an unanswerable

confirmation of the arguments contained in those discourses. The letters are professedly written in refutation of several charges advanced against the Dissenters in a sermon preached at St. Philip's Birmingham, by the Rev. Mr. Madan, entitled "The Principal Claims of the Dissenters Considered." With the personal part of the dispute between these two gentlemen I have no intention to interfere. Dr. Priestley allows the Rector of St. Philip's to be a man of sense and abilities, of an excellent character, and of polished manners; one therefore whom we may conclude to be competent to his own defence, and to want no officious assistant. The part which it might be expected that I ought to take upon me, respects those general assertions that contradict my reasoning in the FREE EXAMINATION, and which I may seem called upon to support, either by confuting the Doctor's arguments, or by confirming my own with an additional weight of evidence.

As the letters are intentionally written in a familiar loose style without a professed chain of argument, and with but little dependence

pendance of one part upon another, it may be impracticable to follow the author closely in so irregular a course, and it is immaterial upon which part we begin, or in what train we proceed. I am aware that if any important argument, which may affect the general question, is misrepresented, it will not readily be overlooked, nor escape correction: But I hope the author will have the candour to suppose that the misrepresentation was not voluntary, and that nothing of consequence has been declined, except what was considered to have been already discussed in the free examination.

Taking therefore the advantage of the ground, as it best suits my own convenience, I begin with combating *in limine* that declaration of Dr. Priestley, that “ he is not to be “ charged with the love of controversy, who “ only defends himself and his writings “ against the person who wantonly attacks “ him.” I had supposed in the opening of my examination of his and Dr. Price’s discourses, that I was engaged with two giants in *controversial* skill, as well as literary fame: it will be therefore incumbent on me to clear
my

my way, and to produce my reasons, on which I presume to ground this supposition.

Dr. Priestley indeed not pretending to decline all controversy, as it means only public discussion, which may end in the elucidation of truth, says afterwards that his controversial writings bear but a small proportion to all his publications; intending by this that he has had but few *personal* disputes except with Bishop Horsley, and some others whom he names, and I recollect also with his friend Dr. Price, in an amicable exchange of sentiment, “on account of his “disquisitions concerning matter and spirit.” I confess that Dr. Priestley’s publications are very voluminous, there being scarce any subject in physics, ethics, grammar, history, politics, chronology, biography, metaphysics, or theology, of which he has not treated most copiously; and perhaps his controversial writings, if he means by them personal altercations only, may not compose the bulk of that formidable catalogue. But if we might be allowed to propose another definition of controversial writings, and include in them whatever attacks opinions as well

well as persons, the remaining part of this catalogue may be reduced to a smaller compass than the Doctor would willingly persuade us. If Dr. Priestley then writes against doctrines which have been generally received, if he searches into remote antiquity to combat positions which have been unanswerably proved, and are now acquiesced in as acknowledged truths, to my weak apprehension it is equally controversial, whether he opposes the writers or their opinions: for in fact it is controverting, or as he calls it publicly discussing (to which we are far from denying his right, as all opinions are open to discussion) what has almost been admitted amongst mankind as axioms: and if by this public attack he provokes advocates to defend the positions he has questioned, he is himself clearly the aggressor, and principal in the controversy, whether his opponents are the public indiscriminately, or the Bishop of St. David's, Mr. Burn, or Mr. Madan individually.

Having thus far produced my reasons for supposing that Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley were giants in controversial skill, at least
 having

having submitted to the reader sufficient proof with respect to one of them, I take the liberty in the next place to vindicate that part of my examination which regards the celebrated quotation from Lord Chatham, and which Dr. Priestley has thought proper to resume for the same invidious purpose as Dr. Price, and to illustrate by new, and, as he thinks, irrefragable arguments.

With respect then to the first assertion that our *Creed is Calvinistic*, Dr. Priestley refers us to the articles of our church, which he declares, as well as others, to be unquestionably Calvinistic: and on this head I shall not repeat what I had before advanced in the note annexed to the examination of Dr. Price's sermon; but shall only refer the reader in my turn to what the Dean of Gloucester has so fully proved, and which never has, and I am persuaded, never will effectually be answered.

But should it be asked in what sense I subscribe to the articles of our church, I answer in none of those different senses in which Dr. Priestley says "the clergy sub-

scribe

"scribe to them, and which at the same time
 "they openly profess not to believe at all."
 I subscribe not to them as "articles of
 "peace;" because if I thought them really
 to enjoin what could not be proved from
 scripture rightly understood, I should make
 no scruple, being authorized by the articles
 themselves so to do, publicly to disavow
 them. I subscribe to them not as the Arch-
 deacon of Carlisle admits those may sub-
 scribe to them; who are not comprehended
 in the description of Papists, Puritans, and
 Anabaptists; because they are not the only
 classes that are in fact excluded by them;
 for I thus far agree with Dr. Priestley, that
 a Socinian who is true to his principles
 could not subscribe to them. I subscribe to
 them not with a declaration at the same
 time, that "I do not believe them, and there-
 fore mean to deceive nobody;" because
 though this open confession might absolve
 me from the charge of hypocrisy, it would
 be publicly avowing perjury: lastly, I sub-
 scribe to them not as a mere admission into
 office; nor with that curious distinction be-
 tween "what is said in the *desk* which the
 "law directs, and what is delivered from
 C " the

“ the *pulpit*, where the preacher is answer-
 “ able for his own opinions.” In what
 sense then do I subscribe to them?—With-
 out any subterfuge or jesuitical ingenuity to
 explain away their meaning, I subscribe to
 them as articles of faith, so far as they are
 agreeable to the word of God; I subscribe to
 them in a sense, in which, from a fair com-
 parison of the different parts of our church-
 service with each other, agreeably to the
 construction of the words justly interpreted,
 and in conformity to the most moderate of
 the foreign reformers in concurrence with
 our own, I am persuaded that our compilers
 intended them to be received, and “ in
 “ which, if they had been now alive, they
 “ would have wished that I should subscribe
 “ to them.”*

But what says the declaration prefixed to
 the thirty-nine Articles? “ That no man
 “ hereafter shall either print or preach to
 “ draw the article aside any way, but shall
 “ submit to it in the full and plain meaning
 “ thereof, and shall not put his own sense or

* See Dean Tucker's Tracts.

“ comment to be the meaning of the articles,
 “ but shall take it in the literal and gram-
 “ matical sense.” But the everlasting de-
 crees of God, to save or to reject certain in-
 dividuals of the human race unconditionally,
 are fully intended, they say, and were expli-
 citly declared by the first reformers, as the
 doctrine contained in these articles; and in
 our interpretation of them we are guilty of
 gross prevarication, if not of direct perjury,
 in not subscribing to them in the same sense
 in which they were originally conceived.
 But this, as I have said, we deliberately deny,
 nay the reverse of this we think so clearly
 proved in those letters to Dr. Kippis to
 which I before alluded, that to those I readily
 refer the reader for that satisfaction and
 comfort which I have received myself.
 “ Whatever is not read in scripture,” says
 the sixth article, and others in nearly the
 same terms, “ nor may be proved thereby, is
 “ not to be required of any man, that it
 “ should be believed as an article of faith.”
 But predestination in the dreadful sense of
 unconditional decrees, (and for this we have
 the additional suffrage of Dr. Priestley him-
 self) I conceive is not expressly declared in

the word of God; and the passages which are supposed to authorize this interpretation, will more naturally admit of a very different construction, namely God's foreknowledge of those who would conform to his offers of pardon and salvation, as well as of those who would persevere in disobedience; the call and election of particular nations antecedent to others, and the predetermined but gradual conversion of the gentile world. When therefore we are called upon to assent to these articles in the literal and grammatical sense, we think ourselves guilty of no equivocation, but subscribe to them justly and conscientiously, if we consider that to be the full and genuine acceptation of the words, which expresses the true intention of the reformers, and renders them conformable to holy scripture; whatever little cavils and objections they may be liable to, from those who are determined to bind us to their interpretation.*

2dly.

* I desire it may be understood that the clergy do not subscribe to the declaration prefixed to the thirty-nin Articles: all that they are required willingly and *ex animo* to subscribe, is the articles themselves with

adly. The second great objection which Dr. Priestley, after Dr. Price, repeats from Lord Chatham against our church is, that its *liturgy is Popish*. I had said before, that we had retained as few observances from popery as possible, and those the most innocent: but if nothing is to be retained to which mankind were accustomed in those times, we must go out of the world, I fear, for a new religion; for there are few things which have not been pre-occupied by our Catholic predecessors. But Dr. Priestley in these letters observes, “ that some things “ which we ourselves should now call Popish doctrines are retained in the articles “ and services of our church.” Among some others, which are of no great moment, he particularly specifies “ the change “ made of the bread and wine in the Lord’s “ Supper into the real body and blood of “ Christ, which is retained in one of our “ articles, and repeated in our church ca-

with the ratification annexed. Subscription to the articles was equally necessary, as a qualification for benefices, before the declaration was prefixed, and therefore in those times the subscription did not include the declaration.

"techism; and the power to which our
 "priests pretend of giving men absolution,
 "when they have confessed their sins to
 "them," which is retained in our office
 for the visitation of the sick. A celebrated
 wit, in what he is pleased to call Philosophical
 Reflections on the late Revolution in
 France, and the Conduct of the Dissenters
 in England, echoes the latter observation,
 and adds, that what might induce Lord
 Chatham to say that our liturgy was popish
 was this very absolution to which Dr.
 Priestley and others had objected, as one of
 the most offensive parts of Popery. Now
 to say nothing of that well-aimed insinua-
 tion of Dr. Priestley, that we too traffic a
 little in auricular confession, it is extremely
 unfortunate, that this particularly obnoxious
 part, that is singled out by both these gen-
 tlemen, on which they may ground the ob-
 jections of the noble Lord to our liturgy,
 is not to be found in it; at least, not in the
 ordinary form of common prayer, which is
 peculiarly called the Liturgy, and is daily or
 weekly read in our church. If there is any
 part of our service that can be called discre-
 tionary, it is indisputably that of private vi-
 sitation

station; in which many of the prayers must be optional in the minister that officiates, and are either read or omitted, as the exigency of the case requires. I should imagine, that there are few instances of any clergyman's now reading the absolution as it stands at present in that office. I readily admit that its pretensions are not warranted; and conceiving that I am left to my own discretion in the private, though not the public service of the church (should any absolution be thought necessary for the consolation of weak minds) I make no scruple to substitute that which is in the communion service, and which is certainly unobjectionable.

Again, "the body and blood of Christ
 " Dr. Priestley says in our twenty-eighth
 " Article, is given, taken, and eaten (he
 " should not have omitted the word *only*,
 " because it makes a material alteration in
 " the sense) after an heavenly and spiritual
 " manner." And in our Catechism we are
 taught to say, that the body and blood of
 " Christ are verily and indeed taken and
 " received by the faithful in the Lord's Sup-
 " per."

“per.” Now we willingly allow that these are some of those not thoroughly-guarded expressions, by which our reformers; not attending to that precision of language which is expected in this age, have given an advantage to their adversaries which they never intended, and which they thought to obviate by those qualifying words, which accompany them: the expressions themselves, though the meaning is obvious to those who are determined not to misunderstand them, seem to militate against their own sentiments. But when it is well known that one of the chief points, on which they separated from the Church of Rome, was this very doctrine of transubstantiation, and Dr. Priestley allows, that the “reformers saw “that this was not countenanced either by “reason, or the genuine sense of scripture,” it is an unreasonable perverseness, that men will not seek for some other sense which these expressions will admit; consistently with the declared intention of the reformers (a mode of interpretation which would certainly be adopted in the explanation of any author whatever) but, contrary to every rule in equity or criticism, will oblige the
 writer

writer to accuse or contradict himself, and confine him to a meaning which he purposely disclaimed.

* The Papists maintain, that the bread and wine are really converted, by the act of consecration, into the substance of the body and blood of Christ. The Lutherans contend that the body and blood are incorporated and communicated with the elements; between which opinions there is more a nominal, than a real distinction. Zuinglius, the Swiss reformer, taught that the bread and wine were only emblems or representations of the body and blood. Calvin, to reconcile the difference between Luther and Zuinglius, held, that the communicants *really eat by faith* the body, and drink the blood of Christ; and our articles and catechism seem to have adopted the same expressions, as a kind of compromise or accommodation between the contending opinions. It is somewhat remarkable, that the

* See Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, translated by Macclaine. Vol. iv. Page 80—Notes.

very Popish construction which is given to these expressions in our 28th article, and in our catechism, by Dr. Priestley, was attempted to be fixed by Bossuet and Courayer, (two strenuous defenders of the Romish Church) upon Calvin himself, whose obscure and figurative language induced them to conclude, that his doctrines, with respect to the Eucharist, differed in substance but little from their own. Now Dr. Priestley and his brethren will hardly affirm that Calvin had any partiality for the Romish Church, notwithstanding these expressions, or that he entertained an idea of a corporal, whatever he might of a spiritual presence, (that is, of its spiritual effects) in the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Why then will they conclude, that we approach so near to that church, because we use the same expressions in the same spiritual sense? and if the learned advocates of that religion cannot fix the stigma of Popery upon Calvin, for these expressions; neither will Dr. Priestley succeed in his feeble attempt upon the Church of England.

3dly. To

3dly. To what has been advanced in the same note to prove our Clergy not the followers of *Arminius*, together with what we have urged above to vindicate our Church from the imputation of Calvinism, little additional evidence need be produced, till we see the present confuted; because I flatter myself that it is conclusive; at least I can perceive no defect or fallacy in the argument. But arguing from Dr. Mosheim, perhaps not thoroughly considered, I may have been guilty of an unintentional mistake in supposing, that the British Divines at the Synod of Dort, espoused the Arminian side of the question unreservedly: I allow that this assertion must be understood with some limitations; for as they seem to have been divided between the moderate tenets which they had imbibed from our first reformers, and the directions given by their master, James Ist. who was bred up in the bosom of Calvinism; and as they, at his instigation, concurred in the condemnation of *Vorstius,

D 2

who

* Vorstius was condemned for publishing his book *De Deo*, in which he is accused of blasphemy
and

who succeeded Arminius in the Professor's Chair at Leyden, it might be advancing too much to say, that they were absolutely on

and Atheism. But Bayle seems to think that Arminianism, against which King James as well as the Belgic Divines were at that time incensed, might be the chief motive for his condemnation. "Les Ministres qui soutenoient contre les Arminiens l'ancienne doctrine de Calvin, se persuaderent que si Vorstius qui n'étoit pas de leur sentiment exerçoit à Leyde la profession en Theologie, il feroit un tort irreparable à leur cause. C'est pourquoi ils presenterent fortement le danger, ils accuserent cet homme d'une infinité d'heresies, ils se munirent du concours des Academies etrangeres, où ils obtinrent des temoignages flettrissans contre sa doctrine ; ils allumerent la religion du Roi Jaques, & l'engagerent à recommander à la Republique de Hollande l'exclusion d'un tel heretique." In a note he says, "On en brula (du livre de *Deo*) plusieurs exemplaries à Londres, à Oxford, & à Cambrige. Le Roi étoit à la chasse, quand on lui porta ce livre: il le parcouru si diligemment, qu'au bout d'une heure il envoya à son resident à la Haye un catalogue des heresies, qu'ils avoit trouvées dans cet ouvrage." After some altercation between the Ambassador Sir D. Carlton, and the States, because they were not so vehement as his master expected, Bayle goes on to say, "L'Ambassadeur peu satisfait de cette reponse, harangua tout de nouveau pour faire ses protestations, & menaça les Etats non seulement de la haine, mais aussi de la plume du Roi Jaques."

on the Arminian side in that famous controversy. But on the other hand, as Dr. Mosheim allows, (vol. iv. p. 498,) that the moderation and equity of these divines prevented the Synod from giving its sanction to the opinions of the *Supralapsarians*, that is, of those who held that God had, from all eternity, decreed the fall of Adam, which is perfectly consonant with the Calvinistic persuasion; and “that those who embraced the *Sublapsarian* system, which admits that God only permitted the first man to fall into transgression, without positively pre-determining his fall (which is in fact not far from genuine Arminianism) that those, I say, triumphed over their adversaries in this Synod,” it may be thought in some measure to justify the assertion, that the British Divines favoured the Arminian doctrines. But Mosheim says further, (p. 515,) that “after
 “the Synod of Dort, the doctrine of absolute decrees lost ground day by day, and
 “that scarcely had the British Divines returned from that famous Assembly, and
 “given an account of the laws that had been
 “enacted, and the doctrines that had been
 “established there, than the King, together
 “with

“ with the greater part of the Episcopal
 “ Clergy, discovered in the strongest terms
 “ their dislike of these proceedings, and jud-
 “ ged the sentiments of Arminius, relating
 “ to the divine decrees, preferable to those
 “ of Gomarus and Calvin.” * Whatever
 there-

* The Letters of Carlton, Bishop of Landaff, one
 of the Divines that were sent from England to
 that Assembly, shew clearly how much they were
 embarrassed between their own sentiments, and their
 wishes to accommodate the Calvinists; and that for
 the sake of peace they were ready to give up some of
 the doctrines which they had maintained in their
 own Theses, “ for we are sure,” he says, “ that this
 “ devise of the universal grace of redemption will not be
 “ received in this Synod:” “ And they might recall
 “ their Theses, and alter them, he says, at pleasure.”
 Dr. Davenant, another of them, though he averred
 that he “ would rather have his right hand cut off,
 “ than recall or alter any thing to which they had
 “ subscribed,” respecting the universal extent of
 Christ’s redemption, and though he produces very
 powerful reasons for supporting that opinion, yet
 when urged by the President to make some conces-
 sions to the majority upon that point, concurs at
 last with the rest in saying, “ Notwithstanding
 “ this tenent of extending Christ’s death to all, and
 “ the universality of the promise, we do firmly
 “ hold the main points controverted not only in the
 “ other four articles (Predestination, Grace, Justifi-
 “ cation

therefore might be collected from those *Theses* which the British Divines maintained in that assembly, or to whatever subterfuges and evasions they might be reduced, to reconcile the original doctrines of their own Church with the Calvinistic tenets of King James, and the general sense of the assembly, nothing can by this be determined against the question, whether the Church of England was indebted to Arminius for the doctrines which were held by that able professor, subsequent to our reformation under Edward VIth. But if our Clergy must be called Arminian, for maintaining those opinions before Arminius was known, it will scarcely be worth our while to contend for a name, while we are agreed in the sub-

“ cation and Perseverance) but in this second article
 “ also Redemption, in our two first propositions,
 “ touching God’s and Christ’s special intention to
 “ redeem effectually, and to merit effectual grace
 “ *only to the elect*. And so shall in all the five articles
 “ define sufficiently against the remonstrants (i. e. the
 “ Arminians) and by this our distinction blunt their
 “ chief arguments in all the five articles, which
 “ otherwise we cannot see how they can be sufficiently
 “ solved.”—See Hales’s Golden Remains.

stance; for it is unquestionable, that if our Clergy be Arminian, the doctrines in which they are instructed, and which they inculcate, cannot at the same time be Calvinistic.

But notwithstanding this concession of Dr. Mosheim's, that the sentiments of Arminius daily gained ground in England from that Synod, it appears still his opinion, which is supported by his translator, adopted by Dr. Priestley, and repeated by Mr. Courtnay, all great authorities, I allow, that the doctrines of Arminius were introduced into England by Archbishop Laud, under Charles Ist. which upon this ground cannot be admissible: for the whole nation was in possession of these tenets by his own confession in the time of James Ist. and I contend, with the Dean of Gloucester, long before. For though the credit of an Archbishop of Canterbury might give them more celebrity, yet as there appears a great conformity between them and those of our first reformers, and they, probably, as I said, came from the same mint, the conclusion before pointed out cannot be avoided; that if they
were

were not generally current in this country before the sanction of the Archbishop's protection, this was not the first time that they were introduced.

I desire not to be considered as the advocate of Archbishop Laud in all his unwarranted exertions of Church discipline. He was indeed a zealous promoter, in the opinion of many perhaps too much so, of our civil and ecclesiastical establishment: but the doctrines for which he contended, were the genuine doctrines of the Church of England; in defence of which, he opposed himself to Calvinism, and favoured the moderate opinions of Arminius, as being more consonant with those doctrines. Those he boldly supported; and he it was who contrived that declaration prefixed to the articles, which does not favour the Calvinists, as Dr. Macclaine supposes, when it prohibits the affixing any new sense to the article, because the articles, as we have seen, were not designed to be understood in a Calvinistic sense; but the declaration was intended solely to favour the Arminians, when it ordered "all curious search about the contested points to

“be laid aside, and these doctrines to be
 “shut up in God’s promises, as they are
 “generally set forth in Holy Scripture, and
 “the general meaning of the *Articles of the*
 “*Church of England according to them.*”

In which passage, I request the reader’s particular attention to these words, *the general meaning of the Articles of the Church of England*; for Dr. Macclaine allows that the whole passage thus selected, was designed to favour, and did effectually favour, the Arminians. *The general meaning therefore of the Articles of the Church of England* was conformable to Arminian, not Calvinistic principles; which was what Laud intended, what all men of candour must admit, and what, from the Dean of Gloucester, I have been labouring to establish.

It is sufficient to give men a distaste to all controversial writings, to see how short-lived even the best are, and that the letters to Dr. Kippis, which contain a most complete apology for the Church of England, which have obviated former objections, and anticipated the present, should now, during the agitation of this revived question, be no

more

more remembered or referred to, than if they had never been, Had Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley these tracts in their recollection, they would never have re-echoed Lord Chatham's reflection, that we have *a Calvinistic Creed, a Popish Liturgy, and an Arminian Clergy*; or did they recollect and leave them unnoticed, because no one else might refer to them, it savours too much of that dissingenuous artifice, too common with all professed controversialists, to suppress every thing that makes against them, to revive dormant arguments that have been long confuted, and to trust to the sagacity of some future Tucker to detect them. I wish to do this justice to the Dean of Gloucester, to whom the English Clergy are as much indebted, if they would but give themselves the trouble to consult him, as to any man that has engaged in the defence of our establishment. His vindication is rational, candid, and conclusive: he conceals no weak part in our constitution, he allows its failings, he proposes remedies for its imperfections; his boldness in the support of truth is the fruit of conviction, his sincerity is unimpeachable.

As Dr. Priestley says that he does not preach upon political subjects but on the 5th of November, and that he never published but one on that day, on which something is expected to be said in favour of public liberty; and as upon this sermon he may not value himself as adding any thing to his great reputation, he may, perhaps, think my time might have been more usefully employed in examining some of his greater productions, than in dwelling upon an inferior performance, which was more a matter of course than of choice, and is not held in the highest estimation by its author. But with submission to Dr. Priestley, I cannot deem so lightly of that performance, though I do not think it unanswerable, as it contains more reasons in a small compass, or as he would call them *concentrated*, than are commonly to be found in more diffuse and elaborate discussions: and in fact his letters addressed to the inhabitants of the town of Birmingham, and insidiously meant to ensnare common understandings, contain very little more than the substance of that sermon dilated only over a wider surface, and weakened in its effects by too general an extension.

“ Like

“ Like other people who think themselves
 “ in the right, Dr. Priestley professes him-
 “ self strenuous to induce others to be of his
 “ opinion.” But does it not look rather sus-
 picious that we are not thoroughly persuaded
 of the truth of our own professions, when
 we are so anxious to obtain proselytes, as if
 our cause were not secure in itself, without
 numbers to support it? The only excuse that
 can be made for wishing to direct others by
 our opinions, because it is depriving them of
 the right of private judgement, to which
 Dr. Priestley should be the last to object, is
 the assurance that inevitable destruction must
 follow, if they decline our direction. But
 even in this case Dr. Priestley will allow we
 should proceed with caution; for by this
 mode of reasoning, the Roman Catholics
 might justify their endeavours “ to convert
 “ a sinner,” either by persuasion, or if that
 will not succeed, by compulsion, “ from the
 “ error of his ways, and to save his soul from
 “ death.” Besides, it has no very favou-
 rable appearance, when a man is continually
 appealing to the young and inexperienced,
 if he cannot prevail on those who may be
 better informed, (as Dr. Priestley has done
 in

in his sermon on the Revolution) to the undergraduates of the Universities, or the honest, but unlearned manufacturers of the town of Birmingham,*

Some of the principal points on which Dr. Priestley, in these letters, exclusive of

* The late Mr. Samuel Badcock, whose name has been so often mentioned in a late unhappy controversy, had a principal share assigned him in the execution of the Monthly Review, and he raised the credit of those criticisms to a height to which they have never attained, either before or since. In his review of Dr. Priestley's Letters to the reply of the then Archdeacon of St. Alban's, upon the subject of his celebrated charge, Mr. Badcock complains, and with too much reason, says the now Bishop of St. David's, that "*Dr Priestley writes for the unlearned.*" His mutilations of ancient authors, sophisticated translations, and management of testimony, his diffusing his dangerous opinions in pamphlets contrived to come within the reach of the poorest of the common people, sufficiently prove that his labours are chiefly calculated *ad captandum vulgus*. He avows his intention of doing "the little that may be in his power, to put an end to our corrupt establishment;" and if the learned and inquisitive are too wary to be ensnared by his subtle and ingenious arguments, he will endeavour to entangle, at least, the little insects in his intricate, but flimsy meshes.—See Bishop Horsley's Tracts, page 84.

what had been before considered (the principal, I say, for there are many so immaterial that they require not a public discussion) are,

1st. The peaceableness of their resolutions, and the little tendency they have to create divisions in the state.

2dly. The imputation under which they labour of a republican disposition.

3dly. Their being upbraided with the odious name of King-killers.

1st. then, Dr. Priestley and the Dissenters affect to wonder why the very inoffensive mode of their application, their meetings and committees constitutionally assembled, without riot or conspiracy, should spirit up such unprovoked resistance. He compares their proceedings to that of the most peaceable classes of the people, not a combination of journeymen, met to advance the price of their labour, but to quiet, industrious manufacturers, to be relieved from a law that

is particularly oppressive. But I cannot recollect any instance in which, where the meetings were equally, by public advertisement, for the redress of supposed grievances, such menaces were held out to Parliament and to individual members, by other associated bodies, if their petition should be rejected. The case of the Quakers which Dr. Priestley produces as applicable to the Dissenters, and as the model which they propose to themselves in their projected union, is the most unfortunate for his purpose of any he could have named. In truth, it seems hardly practicable to draw a parallel between them, except in their district meetings, and the national confederacy now so strongly recommended (though, perhaps, more difficult to be effected than they are aware) of all descriptions of Dissenters. We are referred, as a proof of their peaceable disposition, to the resolutions at their meetings, and to the mildness and moderation of their proceedings. On these points we willingly join issue: we have seen their resolutions dispersed in all the public prints; we are witness to the conditions on which with so
much

much vehemence they have insisted ; we think many of their instructions most inflammatory ; and we are persuaded that the Dissenters have injured their own cause by their intemperance.* The assemblies of the Quakers, on the contrary, are decent and inoffensive, and except a few sarcasms, which return of course at every meeting, against the clergy on the score of tithes, are chiefly confined to the internal regulation of their own fraternities ; they aspire not to offices, for which they have voluntarily disqualified themselves, and are grateful to the state for the toleration they enjoy.

2dly. The Dissenters, as it appears from Dr. Priestley's letters, are much hurt at the odium of republican principles being imputed to them ; and in the address from the Committee of the Protestant Dissenters, dated London, May 11th, and occasionally

* Many of the Dissenters, I allow, aware of the seditious tendency of their meetings and resolutions, have of late rather softened their language : but Dr. Priestley, without fear or remorse, still persists in expressing himself in a manner which moderate people must at least think indecent.

continued to this day, "They cannot help
 " expressing their surprise and concern that
 " they should be so often reproachfully
 " branded with the name of Republicans."
 They challenge us to the proof, and defy
 us to produce one instance that they are
 hostile to kingly government.—Every one is
 aware how difficult it is to prove a self-evi-
 dent proposition ; and this has been generally
 considered as one of those which will admit
 of no medium of proof to render them more
 evident ; for most men seem agreed upon
 the fact, because, perhaps, it has not been
 contradicted, that the principles of the
 Dissenters are republican ; for that they are
 naturally of an equalizing disposition, and
 " even their ecclesiastical government,"
 Mosheim says, " partakes of the nature of a
 " Republic." But since we are thus pub-
 licly " championed to the utterance," we
 must endeavour to illustrate and confirm
 this general persuasion by the best proofs
 which we can produce, but which of course
 will be more circuitous,

Now the Dissenters, I imagine, will not
 be offended to be called by a name, by
 which,

which, as tending to support the liberties of the people, and to abridge the exorbitant power of the Crown, they have hitherto gloried in being distinguished. I am sorry to introduce those barbarous terms, in the etymology of which few are agreed; but the distinction of *Whig and Tory* is but too familiar to our ears, and is in general well understood, though the terms are not so easily defined. Moderate Whigs and moderate Tories are perfectly reconcilable with each other, and mean nearly the same thing, both being equally remote from the slavish principle of passive obedience on the one hand, and from wanton opposition to legal authority on the other: but the violent of both descriptions are divided as far asunder as the north from the south pole. The violent Tory will allow of resistance to a superior under no circumstances; the violent Whig of no superior. The violent Whig is therefore, if there is any meaning in the term, republican; and the very idea of Whiggism, if we give credit to Dr. Swift, or Dr. Johnson, implies Republicanism. But as Dr. Priestley will except against their authority, we will insist only on what is

unexceptionable. The Dissenters, by their own confession are Whigs, and they would think it but an ill compliment not to be supposed such in the strictest sense. With the moderate among them I cordially agree, because I would wish to be understood a friend to Revolution principles not unlimited; but some of them will not be satisfied to be called moderate and lukewarm in the cause, but avow themselves prepared to follow wherever their Whig principles will lead; and are therefore confessedly Republicans: because the Whig principles carried to the extreme, terminate in Republicanism.—Again, the principles of the Dissenters, Dr. Priestley allows, tend to controul and limit monarchs, “that they may do as much good “as they can, and have but little opportunity to do harm:” and when the famous resolution was passed in the House of Commons some few years since, that “*the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished,*” I need not be scrupulous in supposing, that almost the whole body of the Dissenters in the House voted in that majority. The principles of the more violent Dissenters, that

that is, of violent Whigs, tend not only to controul kingly power, but discover also a strong bias to a democracy : democratic principles are, in other words, Republican. The violent principles therefore of the Dissenters, or the principles of the violent Whigs, (and I leave the world to judge how moderate they have shewn themselves) terminate in Republicanism.

If, exclusive of this general reasoning, which may be contested, (as what kind of reasoning is there, which an ingenious sophistry may not find something to carp at) it be required of us to produce positive testimony of this republican disposition, and that the principles of the Dissenters are inimical to kingly government, I shall take the liberty to refer them again to the violent resolutions of some of their late meetings, to the general tenor of our historians, not Clarendon, or Hume, or Carte only, though Dr. Priestley, who is so quick-sighted upon other occasions, cannot discover it ; to the numerous publications, which the present dispute has furnished, as well as to former authors of established reputation, the great Milton,
Sidney,

Sidney, and others, from whose writings we legitimately infer a democratical or republican disposition : but beyond a thousand inferences from general reasoning, we appeal to Dr. Price's sermon on the Revolution, which is industriously circulated in this and in foreign countries, as the standard of political orthodoxy, for their general hostility to crowned heads, and to the sovereign of these kingdoms in particular. But,

3dly. Dr. Priestley labours further to prove, that " the Dissenters cannot be deemed, " as he calls them, *king-haters*, or *king-killers*, merely because the necessary consequence of a war, undertaken for the " people's rights, was the death of a king, " who fell a martyr to his own tyranny and " duplicity." The Presbyterians at least, he says, (as if the Presbyterians swallowed up all the other sects) were not the regicides. We admit it : for Cromwell and his Independents rescued the King forcibly out of their hands, and relieved the Presbyterians from the disagreeable embarrassment in which they were involved ; for they were too cautious to advance, and they had advanced

vanced too far to retreat. But as it cannot be denied that the Dissenters in general reduced King Charles to these extremities, the Presbyterians will hardly be exempted from their share of the ignominy; for the Presbyterians subverted the monarchy, but the Independents destroyed the Monarch; or as it is with more liveliness, but not with less truth, observed by L' Etrange, *Regem primo a Presbyterianis interemptum, Carolum deinde ab Independentibus interfectum.**—

“ At the time of the civil wars the Scots,” says Dr. Priestley, “ were unquestionably “ Presbyterians, if ever there were any such “ people in the world; but though they “ joined the English till the King was effectually subdued, they remonstrated “ against putting him to death.” Thus far we will grant all that our antagonist may require: but when, after the decisive defeat at Naseby, the uninterrupted success of Fairfax in the West, and the fatal check to Montrose’s victories in the North, a faint gleam of hope presented itself to King Charles, by surrendering himself to the

* Mosheim, Ecc. Hist. vol. iv.

Scots encamped at Newark ; even that was instantly eclipsed by their delivering him up to the English Parliament ; which Dr. Priestley allows, though it began with being episcopalian, ended in being presbyterian ; for that delivery soon terminated in his imprisonment. Little advantage was to be expected, in that distressed state of his affairs, by his escape to the Isle of Wight ; for that soon led to a second imprisonment, and that necessarily to his execution ; for it is commonly remarked, that the interval is extremely short between a king's imprisonment and his death. Dr. Priestley, therefore, is not supported by historical fact in declaring, that the Scotch as well as English Presbyterians were innocent of the King's death, for it is evident that they were the concurring causes, though the Independents were the immediate instruments, of his execution.

It would be the height of cruelty and injustice to accuse the present descendents of those regicides of the crime of destroying kings, merely because their forefathers laboured under that opprobrium, as if the love

of *king-slaughter* were hereditary in families ; and they should not, as Dr. Priestley justly observes, be charged with the habit of king-killing—for they killed but one. But if the democratic part should ever predominate over the other two essential parts of our constitution, the same principles, with the same motives, and the same views, may lead to similar conclusions ; and the like tragical scenes, which, under the pretence of retrenching despotic power, disgraced the last century, may be revived in this. The barbarous mode of king-killing indeed may not suit the refined delicacy of this age ; but the gradation is natural and easy from cutting off the head, to clipping the wings of a high-soaring monarch, and cramping his exertions.

Since it is so much the fashion to quote the words of the great Lord Chatham, let me too be indulged in producing the same authority for words delivered also in a debate in the House of Lords. The occasion, if I mistake not, (for I quote by memory, not having the Parliamentary debates near me) was the Commons' denial of the claim of the Lords to interfere in a bill disposing of

the subjects' money. "Your Lordships," said Lord Chatham, with great energy, "cannot be too jealous of the privileges of this House," then after a pause which was usual with him, and made great impression on his audience, "your Lordships will remember, that the House of Commons once voted this House to be useless;" (Dr. Priestley admits that the majority of the House of Commons, which passed that vote, consisted of Dissenters;) and what has been may be again. The same House of Commons brought their King to the scaffold; and should the weight of the Dissenters again preponderate, and similar causes should be pretended for the exercise of their power, what has been may be again.

Dr. Priestley, having exhausted all his wit and argument upon the subject of king-killing and republicanism, adverts again to the beaten topic of the test and corporation acts: for the famous decision in the last House of Commons he is determined shall not influence his opinions, as he is to be swayed by reason, not authority. But those laws, the views with which they were enacted,

enacted, and the expediency of their continuance, have been so fully considered in the free examination, that it may not be necessary to add any thing in confirmation of the arguments there advanced against their repeal. But should it be objected to me, that in my observations on Dr. Priestley, respecting the repeal of the test acts in Ireland, I have assumed as a truth what is contradicted by fact, that the Dissenters in Ireland, exclusive of the Roman Catholics, are less numerous than the members of the established church; I answer, that this is one of those cases which are commonly admitted upon authority, without a strict investigation, because they have not been controverted: and should any one be inclined to combat the position, as I confess I am not possessed of sufficient data, by registers and actual calculations, to ascertain the fact, I shall not contest it; for whether the Dissenters there bear a greater or a less proportion, it decides nothing against the question, whether the abrogation of the Test laws be expedient in England, because it was not thought inconvenient in Ireland. Dr. Priestley says, that this repeal there was no

instance of liberality in the established church, but rather to be considered (as the Dissenters, including the Roman Catholics, are so decided a majority) as a concession extorted from our fears. To say the truth, there was some degree of timidity in our government, as a general defection of all our dependencies was at that time not without reason to be apprehended: America was lost; the West India islands were surrendering themselves without resistance, as being without protection: Ireland asserted claims similar to America, and aspired at independence: an invasion was threatened, an armed force was kept up in the country uncontrouled by Government, and a secret negotiation was strongly suspected to be carrying on between some among them, and our inveterate enemies. In this state of things a little degree of apprehension was not unnatural; and it is no wonder if the petition for the repeal could not, under those circumstances be rejected, when the Irish had so *well-timed* their application; that is, if the ruling powers of this country were contented to suffer what, agreeably to Dr. Johnson's definition of the word *tolerate*,
they

they did not approve. But whether the experience of eleven or twelve years be yet sufficient to establish the utility of rescinding those laws even in that country, may reasonably be doubted, when the experience of a century has not disproved the necessity of continuing them in this.

In Dr. Priestley's observations upon the Toleration and Test Acts (Let. pt. ii. p. 8.) there is something which, I confess, I am too dull to comprehend, or to reconcile to the common ideas entertained upon this subject. The general complaint of the Dissenters against these acts is, that they are excluded from offices which they are in other respects well qualified to execute; because conditions are required of them, with which, from motives of conscience, they cannot comply. But "bad men," says Dr. Priestley, "Atheists,* men of no religion, who laugh at our church, and who will support it no longer than it sup-

* Q. Of what religion are Atheists? for they seem to be distinguished in this place from men of no religion.

“ports them, make no scruple at all of
 “conforming to this test.” And yet he
 had said just before, that “most Dissenters
 “do this, that is, receive the communion
 “according to the rites of the Church of
 “England, and men of honour and princi-
 “ple in his neighbourhood have done it,
 “and, in consequence, hold the office of
 “Justice of the Peace.” How is this in-
 consistency to be reconciled? If these laws
 operate as a restraint upon neither bad nor
 good men; if men of no conscience can re-
 ceive the sacrament as a qualification, and if
 these conscientious men can do the same,
 where is the great hardship which these
 laws impose? But if the conditions are per-
 fectly innocent, as they must be presumed,
 when such good men as Dr. Priestley re-
 presents Mr. Russell and Mr. Taylor to be,
 “men proper to be trusted with any degree
 “of power,” can accede to them, why
 cannot others follow their good example of
 occasional conformity? Why all this cla-
 mour against laws that in fact exclude no
 one, and “are no more than a cobweb that
 “a fly may break through?” Either, there-
 fore, there is something concealed in this
 account

account or this ferment which is raised for the repeal of an act, which concludes nothing, is without foundation. The general grievance is, that while men of no conscience are admitted, those of the most tender are excluded; the very subject of their petition is, that they would violate their conscience by communicating with us to qualify for offices; and yet Dr. Priestley contends, that men of honour and principle do communicate, and in consequence hold offices of power and trust, and still their conscience is not violated.

The opinions of the Dissenters are so various and discordant, that even, according to Dr. Priestley's own account, they diverge more widely from each other, than they do from the Church of England, and a coalition of the different sects, except against the established church, and for the repeal of those offensive acts, is perhaps, on these accounts, impracticable. But Dr. Priestley is a Dissenter of a peculiar cast, disagreeing in some particulars with all, and, by his own confession, excluded from almost every dissenting pulpit in the kingdom. He is
not

not a Calvinist ; for he professes not to believe in the doctrines of predestination and election.—He is not a Presbyterian ; for he has no objection to the use of a liturgy, to premeditated discourses, nor to wear even the common habits of our graduates ; which affords some faint hopes that the great exception to that emblem of Popery, the surplice may in time wear out—He is not a republican ; for he decidedly prefers our form of government to all others, though perhaps he may be inclined to think it leaning a little too much to monarchy—He is not of the Church of England ; and yet he is in principle an Arminian, and he affirms the English Clergy to be Arminian—Whether he is a Baptist or not I have not been able to learn, and it does not appear, whether he approves of infant baptism, of immersion, or aspersion. He may be an Independent in one sense of the word, for he seems unconnected with all the other divisions. In short he is an *Unique*, a Socinian, a Unitarian, who “ believes that Christ was
 “ a man sent of God to teach the true way
 “ to eternal life, and especially to preach the
 “ doctrines of an universal resurrection, and

“ a future judgment ; that in order to enable
 “ him to teach these great doctrines with
 “ effect, he was empowered by God to
 “ work many miracles ; that he was cruci-
 “ fied, died, and was buried ; but that God
 “ raised him from the dead, and took him
 “ up into Heaven ; where he is to continue
 “ till in God’s appointed time he will come
 “ again to raise all the dead, to judge the
 “ world, and to give unto every man accor-
 “ ding to his works.” In other words, that
 Christ did, continues to do, and will do here-
 after such works, as man never did, and can
 never do, and yet that he is not God.

After what I have said it will perhaps sur-
 prize the Doctor, as much as it will many
 others, when I declare myself thus pub-
 licly and unequivocally an *Unitarian*—
 that is, I believe in one God. And what
 will perhaps astonish him still more, I will
 believe in the unity of God in his own ac-
 ceptation—on condition that he will prove
 to my satisfaction, that every passage in
 scripture, in the Prophets of the Old, the
 Evangelists and Apostles of the New Testa-
 ment, which alludes to the Divinity of

Jesus Christ, the existence of the *Word* before the world was, with the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, are forgeries or *corruptions*. But till these proofs are produced, of which I must be the judge, I shall be content to believe in the unity of God upon scripture principles, that hypostatic union, which I can not comprehend, much less explain, and to wait in silent expectation for that time, when *I shall know, even as I am known*.*

Ha-

* With the Unitarian controversy between the present Bishop of St. David's and Dr. Priestley, I presume not to intermeddle: the conduct of that dispute is in much abler hands, and Dr. Priestley never appeared to so great disadvantage as in that very unequal contest. We puny assailants are partizans in a desultory kind of warfare, and like the *Velites* in the Roman army, skirmish a little in the front of the battle, or if we act occasionally as the *Hastati*, are glad to retire for protection to the *Principes* or *Triarii*, among whom, if I may so speak, Dr. Horsley stands distinguished as the *Princeps Triariorum*. Without a metaphor, his Lordship in this controversy discovers a depth of comprehension, a fund of learning, and a closeness in arguing, which prove him far superior to his opponent, whose reading upon these subjects, amidst the variety of his other pursuits, I must confess to be at the same time astonishing. But in this controversy Dr. Priestley depends chiefly on misrepresentation and evasion, sometimes indeed is guilty of palpable misconception

Having advanced in my free Examination of Dr. Priestley's sermon what was sufficient to convince myself at least that the Magistrate has a right, under certain restrictions, to interpose in matters of religion, I might be excused from taking any notice of the same assertions repeated in these letters, (Pt. iii. p. 13) but I cannot refrain from some animadversions on that dangerous position, "that if
 " I do any thing to injure man in his person,
 " property, or good name (things which
 " human laws were intended to guard) I
 " ought to be punished by those who ad-
 " minister such laws : but if I do any thing
 " by which I offend God only and not man,
 " I should be left to the judgment of God
 " in this world or the next." Now Dr. Priestley need not to be informed that the

conception of the authors he produces, and does not seem acquainted with some of the principal writers on the subject in dispute, till they are pointed out to him by his great antagonist ; but yet, though foiled in every encounter, he returns perpetually to the assault, and is determined, as he says himself, to write till the subject is exhausted ; so that a controversy with Dr. Priestley has the comfortable prospect, like some suits in chancery, of not being finished, even with the lives of the contending parties.

judgments of God are seldom executed in this world, and that all offences against the Deity are reserved by him to a future retribution. Is the Magistrate then to hear the name of God profaned by the most horrid impieties, and to take no measures to restrain them? Are his Sabbaths to be polluted, his service contemptuously neglected, and a total want of religion to disturb the peace of society, without being censured in this world, because it may be punished in another? Is Dr. Priestley to be taught that seasonable correction here may check those enormities, and prevent the judgments of God hereafter? But all this is perfectly consistent with that doctrine which would endeavour to persuade us, that religious establishments are the cause of most of the evils which are experienced in this life; that every man should be left to his free choice in spiritual affairs; and that there may be, without clashing with each other, as many religions, as there are individuals.

As Dr. Priestley speaks so decisively that all establishments are fundamentally wrong, that they must introduce the very mischiefs they

they were intended to correct, and defies any of our clergy to refute his arguments if they can, it might be expected of one who undertakes to examine these doctrines, to say a few words in reply to so bold an assertion, though the general sense of the enlightened part of mankind revolts against it, and the Doctor has not the satisfaction to be supported in it, but by a very few, even of his own fraternity. “ If the scriptures are to be interpreted, he says, by the conduct of the Apostles, and that of the early Christians for the three first centuries, we shall be satisfied that his principle is not carried too far, which is, that every man may choose his own religion, or, if he chooses, may be of none at all.” That there was no civil power in that age, which could be applied to Christianity, Dr. Priestley allows, but neither our “ Saviour, he says, nor his Apostles gave any directions about such a thing as a civil establishment of Christianity, when Christians should have the power of making one.” This concession in our turn we may make with great confidence to Dr. Priestley : but
our

our Saviour's directions clearly had respect to the immediate and infant state of the Christian Church. This was not always to continue in that state, but was expected to grow and spread, and in the course of its propagation to fill the whole earth : the instructions that were given, in that early stage of its existence, could not be adapted to it in its more mature state, nor would a permanent and unalterable provision be made for every future and possible contingency. The case was the same with the Apostles after Christ's ascension. The Christian religion grew mightily and prevailed, but it was gradually and in secret, unprotected and discountenanced by the ruling powers of the earth. Rules for its establishment, which might suit it in all steps of its progress, were not considered as necessary, and would probably have been found useless. But when the assemblies of Christians became numerous, and had gained a permanency and stability, then regulations were made for their effectual support ; the magistrate was invited or undertook of himself to co-operate with them, and a formal or implied confederation of the ecclesiastical and civil powers was
crea-

created in this enlarged state of Christianity; not only that the new religion, to which the ruling powers had been converted, might become the established religion, but also that there might not be erected, through the progress and extension of this growing community, *imperium in imperio*.

But Dr. Priestley maintains further, that, as it was the case in the infant state of Christianity, Christian societies should depend upon the “voluntary zeal of its sincere votaries,” not upon forced exactions from those who deny their authority, and wish to have no connection with them; and the example of the dissenters is held out to our imitation, among whom “Christianity, he says, is actually supported by gratuitous contributions.” In societies which bear no great proportion to the whole state, such zeal may be sufficient to nourish and support them during their infancy, but as these societies are enlarged, and their views extended, higher inducements must be held out as the objects of ambition; as it is commonly observed, that where the harvest is but scanty, the labourers will be few. But the dis-

senters should not insist too much on this argument ; for the enormous wealth amassed in the Romish Church arose from what was called *voluntary zeal* ; and the same artifices may again be applied to take advantage of the weakness and credulity of *the sincere voluntaries*. But if the dissenters are so very philosophical, or so very religious, as to maintain themselves by the casual support of gratuitous benevolence, to what uses, give us leave to ask, has the *regium donum* been applied ? Why do they condescend to accept from an establishment, of which they pray to be independent, a certain assistance which may remind them of their dependence ? Either let them acknowledge that Christianity does not continue to be supported as it was in the primitive times, or boldly cancel an obligation, that contradicts their pretensions.

It is confidently said, that “ there would
 “ be much more of religion without an
 “ establishment than with one.” But if all
 are to choose their own religion, which
 would be the case were there no establishment,
 I must except against the interference
 of

of all priests, ministers, and preachers of every denomination; for if they are to influence the people, the people are not left to their own choice, but must adopt the religious principles, which their professed teachers instil into them; and as nineteen parts in twenty in every state can learn nothing of religion without being instructed, nineteen parts in twenty must be without instruction, and consequently without religion.

If every one were to choose, or to suffer his spiritual guide to choose for him his religious creed, Dr. Priestley being a Unitarian, and desirous to prevail on all others to think as he does, would wish of course to make all men Unitarians: another who thought Calvinism the certain road to everlasting salvation, would use his endeavours that all should adopt that persuasion: the Papists, who are convinced that no man can be saved out of their pale, would compass heaven and earth to make proselytes to Popery; for every one has a right, as well as Dr. Priestley, to suppose his own the only true way, and to convert as many to it as he can,

I

and

and then what becomes of each man's free choice if they are all influenced by the address or artifice of others? either therefore they must be left to their own unbiassed and free election, and then the result would be confusion and evil work, or some establishment must become necessary, to prevent those disorders; and men must be contented at any price to be redeemed from this state of anarchy, even "to the diminution of some portion of their liberty," if the loss of a part will preserve the whole.

Having thus shewn that establishments may not necessarily produce all the evils that are charged upon them, I shall beg leave to consider briefly those objections which this author urges against our establishment in particular, and which, exclusive of those cavils against some parts of our ritual before mentioned, may be reduced to these three;

1st, That it is not perfect;

2dly, That it is not old; and

3dly, That it is not new.

ist then, We are ready to allow, that, as all human institutions advance towards perfection by slow degrees, ours also is not—unimproveable—but we desire not ever to improve—“upon compulsion.” We leave to our superiors to proceed, at what time and in what manner to their wisdoms shall appear most expedient, to innovate with caution, to amend with moderation; lest the remedy be more intolerable than the disorder, and reformation terminate in ruin.

2dly, We are told, and in one sense we admit it, that our church is modern: it was not established so early as some others of the reformed churches: but if antiquity is to decide the superiority, Lutheranism is of later date than Popery; Popery than the Jewish religion; the Jewish religion than the Pagan: but I presume that our opponents would not wish to have recourse again to the corruptions or Popery, from which, at the price of so much blood they had escaped; to the burthensome ceremonies of the Jewish law, which by God's direction were superseded; or to the worship of the sun and the moon and all the host of hea-

ven, which can properly be called *no religion*. But Dr. Priestley says, that our church is modern in another sense, for our religion is derived from the Roman Catholics. But this unfortunately labours under an objection which is insurmountable; for it is not fact: for as the Papists may be called Dissenters from the primitive Christians, so the church of England, as the Doctor says, is a Dissenter from the Papists: the church of England, therefore, does not deduce its origin from the Roman Catholics; it only restored itself to the state of the primitive Christians, and is therefore as old as Christianity itself. But,

3dly, For fear we should assume any extraordinary merit from being established later, as they affirm, than others, because that church which was last reformed may probably have corrected the most abuses, we are taught in another place that the “modern
“dissenters as coming after us, must have
“improved upon us,” and therefore must approach nearer to perfection. But as truth is simple, and innovation infinite, should this plea be admitted, reformation must always

ways be progressive; and since by that progression we should never know where to stand, or on what to fix, but must for ever fluctuate in uncertainty; the church of England may on this account be said to have adopted the happy medium between errors that wanted amendment, and continued corrections that know no bounds. We are perfectly contented to have our adversaries themselves prove, that we are neither to be accused of holding obsolete and exploded doctrines, nor that we have fallen into the fashionable excesses of modern innovation.

The time may come, when the present establishment, which seems now so secure, may give way to the rage of reformation; when the legislature may consent, as Dr. Priestley and his associates have threatened, to remove the foundations on which itself rests. But the author of these observations sincerely hopes that he shall be removed to a better state of things, where the present distinctions and regulations, which he esteems essential to our virtue and happiness on this earth, will be no longer necessary, before these things shall be; and that though his efforts

efforts were too feeble to preserve the constitution of his country, he may not have the mortification to survive it; his dying wish, as his dying words he prays may be in the broken accents of the patriot Venetian, **ESTO PERPETUA.**

POST-

P O S T S C R I P T.

DR. Priestley has just published a fifth part of these letters, which finishes the set, for he has given the conclusion, and added a postscript. But as the subject of this letter in general has repeatedly been considered, and is now only reduced to the level of the understanding of his generous *townsmen and neighbours*, to be brought lower, perhaps, hereafter in three-penny and two-penny pamphlets, and suited to the capacities of journeymen and apprentices; I shall only state the contents of it, and briefly remark,

Ist, That, as I have taken occasion to say in the note at p. 50, in the Unitarian controversy, it would be presumption in any one to interfere after the Bishop of St. David's, though he may be no stranger to the arguments and the authorities produced on both sides: for in fact, the principal arguments and authorities produced by Dr. Priest-

ley both from scripture and the earlier writers of the church, have been amply refuted by that learned prelate, or, as his Lordship says, by a predecessor of his in that diocese. But that is no restraint upon Dr. Priestley; the *button-makers* of Birmingham will not read Bishop Horsley's Tracts, or Bishop Bull's *Defensio fidei Nicenæ*.—They may these letters.

2dly, With Mr. Burn's and Dr. Priestley's personal dispute, as with Mr. Madan's, I have no concern. I presume that gentleman to be equal to his own vindication, and I willingly leave the issue of the contest to their own weapons,

3dly, The history of the Dissenters and their general principles are so well known, that nothing new can be expected upon that subject, but the lower classes of the manufacturers were to be taught, how many thousand of the Dissenters were driven into exile, were plundered, were persecuted, tormented, without being reminded of *the sufferings of the clergy*, and the plunder and persecution so many more thousands underwent, when the Dissenters were lords over us; they

they were to be taught what great things the Dissenters had done for them ; that the Reformation from Popery, from which the clergy are always so averse, is to be ascribed to their ancestors ; that the restoration of Charles II. though they avow themselves no friends to monarchy, could not be effected without their concurrence ; and that the glorious revolution in 1688 was owing exclusively to the management of the Dissenters, without the least obligation being allowed to the conduct of the Episcopalians, or to the fortitude of *the seven Bishops* of the church of England.

4th, The situation of the established clergy we are not to be informed is an object partly of envy, partly of compassion. The inferior orders may labour under some difficulties ; but they have brighter prospects before them, and need not be without hope, if they are not without exertion. For the sincerity of our subscriptions we are accountable to our great judge, and not to Dr. Priestley.

K

5th,

5th, The calumny contained in a pamphlet entitled Theodosius, I own, astonishes and affects me greatly; for I will not suppose, that any one, who believes in the Christian religion however modified, can disbelieve a God. I heartily wish Dr. Priestley success in his endeavours to detect ~~the~~ the author, and to bring him to repentance, if he has the charity to forgive him. I am happy, however, to find that he readily exculpates the venerable John Westley; though it grieves me to observe that he thinks himself justified in fixing his suspicion upon a clergyman of the church of England: I hope that all will be able to speak to him with the same confidence that I do, "Thou canst not say I did it."

5th, On the nature of the intercourse between the late Mr. Badcock and Dr. Priestley it would have shewn more generosity to be silent. But the very unqualified declaration that "the Sermons the most admired for their composition that our Church has boasted of in the present age, appear to be written by Mr. Badcock, at that time a dissenting minister," there is

now living evidence to confute: a Clergyman of the established Church, in high repute for his great learning and abilities, should Dr. White's pretensions be disallowed, has openly asserted his claim to no inconsiderable share in those lectures, which, whatever assistance might have concurred in the execution, may be held forth as the standard of fine writing, sound reasoning, and true faith: and it is some degree of triumph that Mr. Badcock, whatever were his motives (for which Dr. Priestley *ought not to judge him, that he be not judged himself*) a better writer, a more sound divine, if not so deep a philosopher, and so universal a scholar as Dr. Priestley, actually received ordination from the hands of a Protestant Bishop, unpreferred and without the prospect of preferment, conformably to the rites of *the Church of England*.

THE END.

